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BY

ROBERT S. RANTOUL

BOSTON
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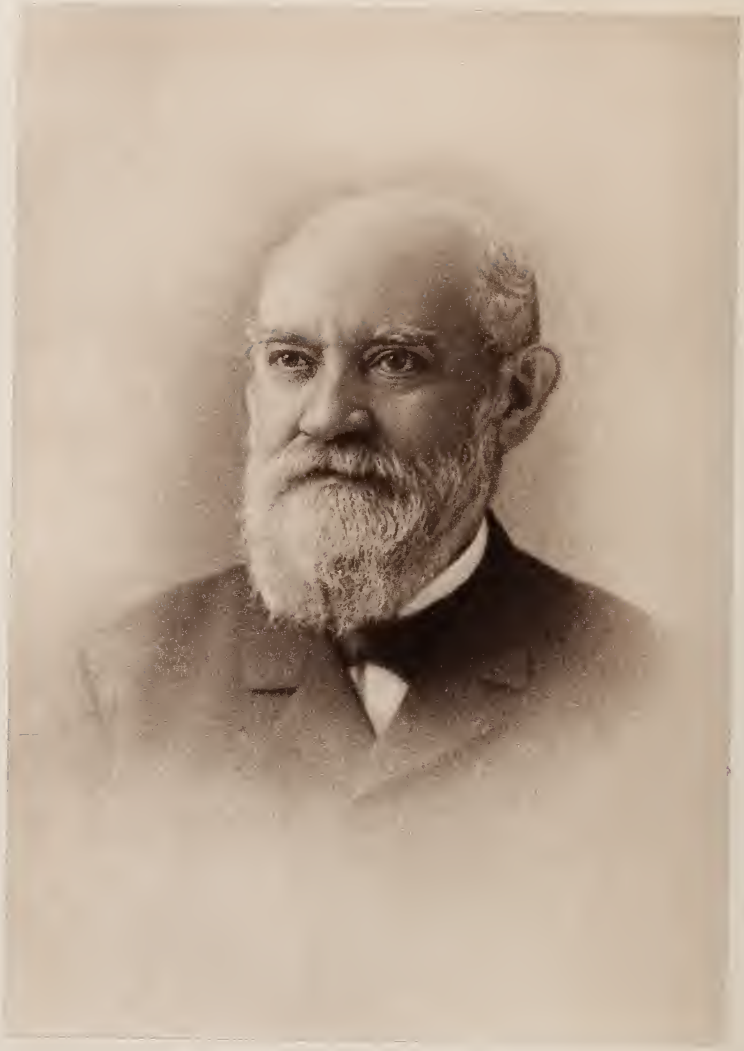

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From the

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MEMOIR

THE subject of this memoir was a unique personality. He was born at Beverly, January 4, 1826. His father was William Endicott, who succeeded Robert Rantoul, Senior, in the country store established by the latter at Beverly in 1796. William is a name of frequent recurrence with the Endicotts — a Dorsetshire family — and one William Endecotte was a "full fellow" on the rolls of Exeter College, Oxford, in 1580. Since 1774, the Endicotts of New England have spelled the name with an "i." The elder William Endicott was of the nearest generation of descendants living in his day, from the Colonial Governor, and was a son of Robert Endicott of Beverly, whose wife was a Holt of Danvers. This Beverly William Endicott died at Beverly in 1899, when lacking in age but a month of his full century. He was nine months old when Washington died. He married in 1824 Joanna Lovett, the eldest child of Robert Rantoul, Senior, and she was the mother of our subject, and died at St. Louis while journeying at the West in 1863.

William Endicott of whom we write showed, as a child, marked intelligence and activity. I grew up in close touch with him — too close, perhaps, to view him objectively and to see him in his true perspective. When we went nutting or berrying or fishing, not only was he the life of the party, but he was sure to bring home more nuts or berries or fish than any other member of it. When told that his mother's cousin, Andrew Preston Peabody, had, as a child, first learned to read the inverted page while he stood at the knee of a teacher who was hearing recitations, it appeared that young Endicott had mastered the same odd accomplishment. As a schoolboy he passed a summer vacation on a farm at Andover. There he solved

the mystery of cheese-making — constructed a practicable toy cheese-press and in it made miniature cheeses, of the size of a Spanish dollar, which he distributed among his playmates.

He was destined for Harvard College, but his parents hesitated to fit him for professional life, medical advisers questioning whether he could bear the strain. Pulmonary consumption was the universal dread in Beverly at that time, attributed by Agassiz, when he first visited the town in 1846, to the conformation of the coast. It has since lost much of its terror. But, on leaving the Beverly Academy, an incorporated school, well kept at that time by Thomas Barnard West of Salem, young Endicott, at the age of fourteen — he had no further schooling — joined his father in his local business and was there not long after discovered by the late Charles Fox Hovey, who had just left the Boston firm of J. C. Howe and Company and had, with partners, set up in business for himself, and was building at that time his summer residence on the high ground west of Gloucester Harbor. The Endicotts were customers of the Hovey Company, and Mr. Hovey, in riding through Beverly to Gloucester — there was no railroad to Gloucester then — often stopped and did business with them. In this way he was aware of the rare faculty shown by the subject of this sketch in grasping business problems, and became anxious to offer him a place as treasurer in his Boston warehouse. He did not wait long to welcome him as a partner. Mr. Hovey was a Jeffersonian Democrat and a very independent thinker, and was in declared sympathy with the anti-slavery agitation then becoming rife. The Endicotts held like political views, William Endicott, Senior, having supported Crawford for President in 1824, and later Jackson. Young Endicott's maternal grandfather had been a rigid Federalist and a disciple of Timothy Pickering, imbued with all the party's jealousy of slave-representation and slavery extension, often chosen to office through that party's support, and only quitting it or what remained of it in 1828, in revolt against the protectionist policy of Clay, Secretary of State under John Quincy Adams, then a candidate for a second Presidential term. It was this so-called "American System" which drove scores of old-line Federalists, with Pickering at their head, into the support of Jackson.

No sooner had young Endicott found himself in the receipt of an income than he began to indulge the public spirit which marked his career. At times he lived in Boston and at times spent the night in Beverly, for the railroad lately opened made the latter course possible. He early joined a little group of young townsmen in offering concerts, in stimulating the growth of a public library, and in sustaining the historic Lyceum. When he passed between Beverly and Boston day by day, the extent to which he made himself the medium of transmission for messages and errands at the service of his friends — there was no express conveyance then — anticipated his life-long practice of bearing others' burdens. Before the Civil War broke out he had identified himself with the new "Republican Party," and supported Julius Rockwell for Governor in 1855 and Frémont for President in 1856. He was contributing to party funds, attending party conventions, and was so far recognized as a co-worker with Whittier, and Dr. Howe, and Amos A. Lawrence, and George L. Stearns, in extra-political efforts to save Kansas to Freedom that, when the John Brown raid startled us in 1859, he was among those branded as "suspect" by the Mason Senatorial Committee. But his sympathies were, in the main, with the advocates of political movements and constitutional measures — of such steps as Lincoln, and Chase, and Whittier, and Sumner, and Judge Hoar, and Governor Andrew advocated, rather than with the extremists who denounced the Constitution and distrusted and disparaged the Union. He disliked their methods, and while he made a contribution which secured to Garrison the statue in Commonwealth Avenue, because he thought the man who unselfishly supports his honest convictions at the risk of his life has earned a monument, he said from first to last that the extremists, sincere as they were in their efforts, played but a small part in the abolition of slavery. He thought, with the old Federalists, that we had been drawn, under the stress of revolt against British despotism, into making a necessary compact with the Southern colonies which they had come to feel their interests compelled them to annul. He thought the North should keep faith, but he would enforce an equal obligation on the South.

From time to time he took active part in political conventions. He was present in 1856 at the gathering in Philadelphia

which nominated Frémont, and again at the mortifying fiasco at Cincinnati in 1872 where, unable to profit by the moderation of such advisers as Carl Schurz, and Horace White and himself, public-spirited men, called together to attempt the defeat of Grant for a second term in the Presidency, adopted the inconsequent step of nominating Horace Greeley. During the years when Butler was storming the Republican citadel for that party's nomination as Governor of Massachusetts, Mr. Endicott made it a duty to be present and active during the midnight disturbances preceding those conventions, and did much to defeat the struggles of a political ambition which was at last rewarded only by recourse to the support of another party.

Mr. Endicott had a disinclination for public life. Often urged to become a candidate for Congress, he uniformly refused. He distrusted his capacity for addressing people in numbers. He was probably right in thinking that he did better to rely on his facile pen and his earnest, persuasive, personal appeal for bringing his clean-cut convictions to the notice of the possible convert. But in practical politics he was no dilettante. He was willing to bear his share of the unpleasantness of election-day drudgery rather than have to reflect that unsatisfactory results might have been less serious but for his inaction. Three days before his death, though suffering much, he cast his vote in the State election.

He was an indifferent speaker. His choice of phrase was nice and scholarly, but his voice was not effective, nor was his presence commanding, and he always shrunk from speaking in public. Twice I saw him called on without notes to address a gathering. In both instances he acquitted himself well. Once he addressed this Society in the commemorative observances on the death of Norton. And once he addressed the Massachusetts Republican State Central Committee at a dinner tendered, in Henry Cabot Lodge's first year in the chair, to Governor-elect Robinson, on the defeat of Butler. But his contributions to the campaigns in which he enlisted were mainly literary and financial, and in the Butler campaign, and again in the McKinley-Bryan campaign of 1896, he produced financial papers which were reprinted throughout the country and even in English journals of authority, such as John Bright's *Daily News*, as apt to afford aid to the stability of our currency

and of the public credit. His printed reminiscences show how deeply he studied fiscal questions.

Mr. Endicott's active career was co-terminous with the latter half of the nineteenth century. This was a period of rare activity in our quarter of the world. Great industrial and scientific changes were afoot. Facilities for the transportation of persons and freight took the great start which made possible the wonderful development of our Northwest, and facilities for the transmission of intelligence, quite as vital to the rapid growth of the country, went through a radical revolution. The relation of an active-minded, public-spirited man to the developments going on about him has an interest beyond mere personal concern.

The first transcontinental railway enterprise was undertaken, at the beginning of this era, by eastern capitalists who proposed to unite by continuous lines the Great Lakes with Mobile Bay. Such needed legislation as Senator Stephen Arnold Douglas could not secure at Washington, from the general government, remained for my father, representing the corporators of whom he was one, to secure at Springfield from the State of Illinois. But the Illinois Central Railroad, after starting out auspiciously, was plunged into untold disaster, which was precipitated by the defalcation of its president, and prolonged by the panic of 1857. My father died suddenly in 1852, and Mr. Endicott joined Charles Greely Loring in an effort to extricate his estate from the disorder. From that time on there was no year in which Mr. Endicott was not actively studying the problems of railway traffic, until federal legislation, enacted in Roosevelt's time, made it unsafe, in Mr. Endicott's view, longer to hold railroad securities.

This experience, coupled with an inborn detestation of war, and the natural leaning of an importer and a Democrat towards the greatest practicable freedom of trade, promptly brought him into sympathetic touch with Richard Cobden, the father of the anti-corn-law agitation in England, the apostle of the British free-trade evangel, the negotiator of the epoch-making commercial treaty between England and France, when, in 1854, that statesman made his second tour of the United States in the interest of a group of English holders of securities in the Illinois Central Railroad. Mr. Cobden, with many friends

who followed his lead, was involved in the common disaster. He suffered in repute and in purse, and he died at the close of our Civil War, after noble service rendered in behalf of the struggling Union. In the Cobden Club, formed the next year, Mr. Endicott was made an honorary member, and with John Bright he maintained an intimate and friendly correspondence while they both lived.

The momentary success of the first Atlantic cable enterprise was announced late in 1858, but the enterprise was doomed to a long interval of coma before it reached its ultimate issue. Mr. Endicott had his own reasons for putting its claim to a rigid test. Doubters were many. Mr. Endicott sent a despatch to the bureau of Hovey and Company in Paris, conveying by cable an item of personal intelligence which could by no conceivable form of collusion have reached Paris at the time of its receipt in any other way, and that despatch hangs there framed to-day — silent witness to a fact having at that time very considerable import for the sender. An adventurous group of capitalists had taken measures to unite New York and Chicago with St. Petersburg, Paris and London, by means of electric wires strung on poles across Alaska, Bering Strait and northern Asia. Funds were in hand for the preliminary steps, surveys were practically complete, and the enterprise only awaited the failure of the submarine experiment that it might feel the vital spark.

Quem, si non tenuit, magnis tamen excidit ausis!

Though marked throughout by close attention to the routine of business, Mr. Endicott's life was not without its picturesque features. At one time he was condemned for months to absolute vacuity of mind — the penalty of overwork — and was directed to seek some region which mails and telegraphs did not invade. Only the polar zones would answer now, but at that time such a resort was offered by the drowsy current of the Nile. Weeks of listless drifting in a sumptuously equipped dahabieh restored his vigor and left him more a stranger to what was going on in the busy world than the deaf-mute of our day is permitted to be. The comparison is a fair one, for he was a long time treasurer of the Perkins Institution for the Blind and greatly interested in what he found there, and especially in the acquirements of Helen Keller, sometimes entertaining

her at his Beverly home. Friends had died, business ventures had gone wrong, a portion of his life had drifted away during his enforced period of occultation. Before leaving Egypt he had been presented at the sybaritic court of the Khedive, and had sipped coffee from his golden cups and shared a whiff from his amber-tipped chibouk. Few men not wedded to sea life had crossed the Atlantic oftener than he. Finding himself one year approaching at the Christmas season the neighborhood of Palestine, he thought it would be a pleasant memory to pass the yearly festival at what is claimed to be the Holy Sepulchre and to take part there in the prescribed observances of the hour. On arriving he found a party of Greek Church pilgrims engaged in a wrangle for precedence with a party of pilgrims of the Church of Rome, and it became so violent as to call for the intervention of Mussulman militia to preserve the peace!

The number and variety of groups with which Mr. Endicott kept himself in touch bear witness to the catholicity of his tastes. He was constant for thirty years in his attendance at the monthly dinners of the Saturday Club. Certainly it was no small compliment for a little club, made up of the very first characters — a club of which Dr. Holmes could say that "Emerson was the nucleus around which it gathered," a club of which Agassiz could say that "it had enlarged his view of life," a club at which every foreigner worth meeting who came to America was a guest, a club where Emerson "found his attitude mainly that of a listener" and which he looked to for his ideal of club life — "In our club no man shall be admitted who is not worth in his skin five hundred thousand. One of them I hold worth a million, for he bows to facts, has no impertinent will, and nobody has come to the end of his resources" — for such a club, "a focus of good-sense, wisdom and high patriotism, whence sprung many measures important to the country" — for such a club as this to invite one who had no claim to authorship, or statesmanship, or comradeship, but was a simple, unassuming business man, only qualified by keen native wit, a close touch with such careers while in the making as Whittier's, and Lowell's, and Judge Rockwood Hoar's, and Judge John Lowell's, by a very broad intelligence of what was passing in the world at large and a friendly hand for everybody — for such a club to invite him was the compliment of a lifetime.

He was a founder and a working member of Mr. Forbes' Loyal Publication Society. He was honored with an election as president of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, which he declined, and as president of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which he accepted after serving for a full generation as its indispensable first treasurer; and he was reckoned by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as its wheel-horse — one of its earliest, its most active and its most untiring helpers. At the Massachusetts General Hospital and McLean Asylum he indulged himself for years in the luxurious munificence of a free bed or two, and for a quarter-century he served that charity in the onerous and exacting function of a State Director. When Governor Butler found himself constrained by his sense of public duty to dispense with his further service, and named a Director to succeed him, a vacancy by resignation was at once created, which could be filled by the Board without recourse to the executive conscience. To it he was elected, so that his service continued without interruption. In company with ex-Governor Long, and with an eminent practical builder, he was appointed by Governor Ames to the Commission of Three which supervised the State House Extension of 1889, and his exact system of accounting — he dispensed with all clerical aid, his own delicate handwriting serving him to the exclusion of secretary, typewriter and stenographer — has left on record at the State Capitol a lasting memorial of what was understood in the nineteenth century by devotion to public duty.

That the men who did the fighting should seek the fellowship of the men who stayed at home and did the financiering was an honor upon which both Mr. Forbes and he set a high value. But nobody perceives more keenly than the soldier what a terrible load the war-financier is bearing, nor what Sumner meant when he wrote to Fessenden that the next great battle was to be fought in Wall Street, nor what it means to the country if obligations are not promptly met and service-money promptly forthcoming, nor what a hopeless mob a great army becomes the moment it finds itself in need of food and clothing. Mr. Endicott was the last survivor of the honorary membership of the Loyal Legion of Massachusetts.

Mr. Endicott married, in 1856, Mrs. Annie Thorndike,

widow of John Frederick Nourse of Boston. She died in 1876, leaving him with two children.

It would be idle, in a paper of this kind, to attempt a catalogue of the public philanthropies and private charities with which he filled his life, and yet without this feature the picture is unfinished. Unpaid service seemed to be his highest privilege. He was one of those helpers who make a friend's predicament their own. Trusts and directorates and presidencies seemed to reckon themselves fortunate if they could secure his name. Many of them he filled for a generation. Two of these, to name no others, were the presidencies of the Suffolk Savings Bank and of the New England Trust Company. And when the time came for him to turn them over to less enfeebled hands, he found himself resigning them by dozens.

In stature Mr. Endicott was slight, his movements were quick and nervous — "alert in body and mind" — and his exceptionally little feet and hands were a constant reminder of the Huguenot extraction of his mother's kin. He was no indifferent French scholar. Born at the starting point, in time and place, of the New England Unitarian movement, Mr. Endicott never had affiliations with any other sect, and his will made a substantial addition to the trust funds of the Boston Young Men's Union and to the ministerial fund of the old First Church of Beverly in which he grew up and with which he was allied until, just before the war, he became a proprietor in King's Chapel at Boston. He was a Resident Member of this Society from March 8, 1906, until his death, contributing to the *Proceedings* two valuable papers of personal reminiscence, and constant to a degree in his attendance on our meetings until growing infirmity made it a burden for him to climb the stairs. Mr. Endicott died in Boston, November 7, 1914, and was buried at Beverly, where he retained through life a cherished summer home.

And so the old Commonwealth adds one more name to her list of worthies.

ALBERT THORNDIKE TO CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

BOSTON, December 7, 1914.

DEAR MR. ADAMS:

Not one of the notices about William Endicott (that I have seen) has laid enough stress on the "personal" side of his character. It

is hoped that when the Massachusetts Historical Society memorial — which is the important record made — is written, this will be more strongly brought out. To those who knew him at all intimately, the delight of his personality as distinctly marked the man as did his public successes.

He was fundamentally of strong will, firm opinions and earnest, though in manner very simple and unassuming, almost mild, notwithstanding his ability to enforce well his purpose. His bearing was unassuming and absolutely democratic; he held himself the same before all men. Those who met him knew this; but those who had seen him often also knew him as one of never failing kindly humor and wit, one who quickly saw and seized the humorous side. A joke was never forced by him nor humor overplayed; but the point was lightly and spontaneously brought out in a characteristic way, or if brought out by another, gratefully appreciated. Even in talk of serious things, the wit and the smile were ready and often used. Notwithstanding all the work accomplished, this lighter vein was, with him, always near the top.

In his remarkable, tenacious and accurate memory were stored a host of anecdotes of the people he had met in his long and active life. Whether it was a statesman, a man of business, or even those in the humblest walks of life, what he had ever known of interest about them, he remembered. He would tell the stories well and wittily, but with exactness, and often minutely dated them, though they might be sixty or seventy years old. It was a delight to hear him reminisce; and though likely that part of the pleasure was in the manner of the telling, still it is wished that various of these tales, trivial but entertaining, and touching on so many sorts and conditions of men and covering so much time, could have been preserved. Such things were not for a formal paper; so his *Reminiscences*, written for the Historical Society, do not have them.

From his interest in grave subjects and the seriousness of his work, one might think of him as ponderous and solemn. Those who come after us will not know him, if they cannot see more of him than his achievements, his broad charity and kindnesses. With all this was the lighter side, the quick, quaint and gentle wit, the constant cheeriness (even in suffering), the love of the little brightnesses of life and the ability to joke (even when serious), all of which kept around him an atmosphere such as few are blessed enough to live in. Yours very truly,

ALBERT THORNDIKE.

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